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Letter dated 5 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the serious situation in the Gaza Strip.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement are following events on the ground with great concern and strongly condemn the military aggression that Israel, the occupying Power, is carrying out against Gaza.

In flagrant disregard of both the international community's appeals for the cessation of military activities and the ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, Israel has further escalated its military offensive by launching a ground invasion of Gaza.

As a result of these activities, thousands of innocent civilians, including many Palestinian children, have already died or been injured.

I must convey to you the Movement's deep disappointment at the Security Council's inability to carry out its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the current circumstances. Despite what has already occurred, over a week after the sustained military attacks were launched, the Security Council has yet to take any concrete measure to halt the aggression.

On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, I again request the Security Council to take urgent action to address this serious situation.

I attach herewith a copy of the statement made today by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the escalation of Israel's military attack on the Gaza Strip (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abelardo **Moreno Fernández**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau
of the Non-Aligned Movement

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Annex to the letter dated 5 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

Statement by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Escalation of the Israeli Military Aggression against the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) strongly condemns the escalation of the military aggression being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Gaza Strip. NAM is gravely concerned by and condemns in particular the launching of the Israeli ground invasion in Gaza in flagrant defiance of the calls by the international community for a cessation of military activities and of the regional and international diplomatic efforts underway to resolve the current crisis.

NAM expresses its deep regret at the loss of innocent life as a result of the ongoing Israeli military attacks against the Strip, including the killing of more than 460 Palestinian civilians, among them several children, and the injuring of nearly more than 2,500 other civilians, as well as the massive destruction of property and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

NAM reiterates that this unacceptable Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip constitutes a grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, fuels the cycle of violence and threatens international peace and security as well as the fragile peace process between the two sides.

NAM calls for an immediate cessation of all military activities and violence and for the implementation of an immediate general ceasefire. Israel should immediately cease all its military attacks and scrupulously abide by all of its obligations, as the occupying Power, under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, the Movement urges Israel to unconditionally comply with its obligations under international law, including the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

In view of the indiscriminate bombings affecting the civilian population, including women and children, as well as the severe humanitarian crisis prevailing in Gaza, NAM also calls for the immediate provision of protection for the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.

The Movement expresses grave concern about the deepening humanitarian crisis being faced by the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza as a result of the current military actions, the continued closure of all border crossings and the obstruction of access of humanitarian aid, including food and medicines, and the reduction of fuel and electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip by Israel.

In this context, NAM calls upon Israel to end the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and to allow for the immediate and sustained opening of the Gaza

Strip's border crossings to ensure the free access of humanitarian aid and other essential supplies and goods as well as to facilitate the passage of persons to and from the Gaza Strip.

In light of the gravity of this crisis, NAM expresses its deep disappointment at the inability of the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security. Despite more than a week of sustained military attacks that have gravely affected the civilian population and heightened instability and tensions in the region, the Council has regrettably been unable to take any concrete measure to end the aggression. Once again, the Movement requests the Security Council to act urgently to address this grave situation.

NAM stresses the need for intensified and coordinated efforts by the international community to bring an end to this crisis and to exert all necessary efforts to support and promote the peace process as well as to ensure respect for international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, the key to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, as the sole means to guarantee a lasting peace in the region.

The Movement is convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict. In this context, NAM reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

New York, 5 January 2009